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their shape and proportions? Might they be distinguished from the embroiderer, who thinks of a single figure, and plies one color at a time?

Browning adopts the form of narrative interspersed with dialogue; but the narrative and the dialogue are pieces of identical pattern. The characters are different pipes of the same organ-stop; and the ten poems are resembling tunes played in one style. The poet is conscious, like Lucretius, of a didactic purpose, not indeed speculative, but ethical or religious. Homer is alive with the sentiment of race; he is moved by the legends which are the history, the religion, the life, the pride of a whole nation. Shakespeare's motive is the love of human beings; he likes to portray, without judging them. Iago and Lady Macbeth, Dame Quickly and Dogberry, are as interesting and dear to him as Brutus or Imogen. Herein, because he is the one unmoral, he is the greatest, and the one un-English, of English writers. But the cause of "The Ring and the Book" is a moral and religious lesson, —

"This lesson, that our human speech is naught,
Our human testimony false, our fame
And human estimation, words and wind."

The ten poems are ten sermons on the same thesis; and each is shaped by a logical process. The story is of no account, except as it serves the poet's purpose of showing a few characters in a great variety of relations, and of illustrating his thesis. To the reader who, losing sight of the purpose of the book, should object to the repulsiveness of the theme, the poet might say, in the words of "The Statue and the Bust," —

"O, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,
As a virtue golden through and through."

5.—*Annals of the American Pulpit; or, Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of various Denominations, from the early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five.* By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D. Volume IX. New York: Robert Carter and Brothers. 1869. 8vo. pp. xii., 210; xiv., 242; xi., 135; xii., 172; ix., 91.

DR. SPRAGUE'S great work is approaching completion, only one volume remaining unissued. We call it a great work. It is so in other senses than that of bulk and weight. It is so in the energy, perseverance, and skill that have planned and executed it, in the truly generous and catholic spirit that has governed its execution, and in the em-

inent position and ability, and the wide diversity of taste and talent, to be recognized among its contributors. As some of our readers may not be familiar with the design, we will state it in brief. Many years ago Dr. Sprague — well known as a friend and lover of all good men — conceived the idea — which, strangely enough, had almost the merit of a discovery — that the chief reason why sincere Christian believers of different denominations hate one another so cordially is, that they are ignorant of one another's actual character. It occurred to him that there was no so sure peace agency among the jarring sects as the favorable introduction, to the members of each separate fold, of the foremost and best men from the other compartments of the Church. As, in this country, the clergy have been pre-eminently the *parsons* (*personæ*), or representatives, of their respective denominations, it was supposed that a series of clerical biographies would most directly accomplish the desired end. Accordingly, Dr. Sprague has brought together in these volumes the biographies of all the really distinguished members of the clerical profession in our country, from its settlement to the year when the publication was commenced. Some of these sketches he has written himself; but most of them have been furnished by relatives, friends, associates, or successors of the persons commemorated. In employing such aid, Dr. Sprague has probably expended more labor than would have been needed for collecting the materials and shaping them with his own pen; but by this method he has eliminated all personal preference and prejudice, and has insured the representation of each of his subjects in such guise as he wore in the eyes of those who knew him best and loved him most.

This work, though intended simply as a series of clerical biographies is much more. Whether for good or evil, the clergy of America, until the present generation, have made a large portion of its history. Their lives have been often eventful, and, when not so, typical and illustrative of times, communities, manners, and opinions. Their action was, till recently, hardly less conspicuous in the State than in the Church, and their social influence made itself felt profoundly and enduringly. It may, then, be easily imagined how valuable these volumes are as a repertory of general and local history, and of those details of the social and domestic life of the last two centuries which, in our day of rapid movement, are fast passing out of familiar knowledge into the department of archæology.

Many of these notices, too, are remarkable monographs, as regards literary execution, artistic skill in the grouping of characters and incidents, and vividness of portraiture and narrative. There are very few American writers of merit, of either the present or the just pass-

ing generation, who have not been pressed into the service. Indeed, Dr. Sprague's aim has been, whenever practicable, to have his materials furnished by men of established reputation, whose names would give an added interest to their subjects.

In the preceding volumes the more numerous denominations have been represented. The present volume is devoted to five of the smaller religious bodies which have obtained foothold among us by immigration, other than English, namely, the Lutheran, Reformed Dutch, Associate, Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian, — the last three names, so far as we can learn, designating distinctions rather than differences. A very large proportion of the subjects of this volume were natives of Germany, Holland, Scotland, or Ireland, came to this country as pioneers in the religious exploration of new settlements, and encountered the class of experiences which are more pleasant in the recollection than in the endurance. Though most of their names were new to us, we have found a peculiar charm in their lives; and some among them will have an enduring and favored place in the portrait-gallery of our memory. We have never read a biography in itself more noteworthy, or more attractive, than that of John Anderson, D. D., — a story that provokes alternate tears and laughter, presenting in the same man a curious commingling of the saint, the sage, and the simpleton, — one who was fit to commune with angels, and yet might have called out the pitying ridicule of a travelling tinker. We do well to catch and retain these pictures now, for the like will never again be painted. Steam and telegraph are obliterating the *piquant* eccentricities which have made our American rural and village life so picturesque. The tendency now is toward a normal type in manners, dress, habits, and character. We are thankful for every record of the times when men nursed their idiosyncrasies, and were only the more cherished and honored for them. Among the many services which Dr. Sprague has rendered to the public by his "Annals," we deem this by no means the least.

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6. — *The Study of Languages brought back to its true Principles, or the Art of Thinking in a foreign Language.* By C. MARCEL, Knt. Leg. Hon., author of "Language as a Means of Mental Culture," "Premiers Principes d'Éducation," etc. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1869. 12mo. pp. 228.

THE title "Marcel on Language" has been made familiar to the American public by the recent discussions upon methods of classical